

APPROVED 06 NOVEMBER 2008
APPLICATION NO. 2008/4163/L

Langland Hotel Refurbishment Gower Street London

Listed Building Application Supporting Statement

Introduction

This document has been prepared by Buchanan Associates Architects (BAA) in support of a listed building application for works to the Langland Hotel, 29-31 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HG. The owner's wish is to refurbish the building's interior to a high standard appropriate to a listed building in this location. No external alterations are proposed but the building's exterior will also benefit from repair and redecorations in the course of the works.

Client brief

BAA's client for the Langland Hotel refurbishment is Victor House Hotel Limited of 7 Hazlitt Mews, Hazlitt Road, London W14. It is part of an experienced hotel group with several hundred rooms under management in Central London. Following a review of the customer offer at the Langland Hotel Victor House has decided to refurbish the building to raise the quality of the accommodation. This is considered to be both necessary and desirable for commercial reasons. The instruction from the client is twofold; firstly to maximise the saleable accommodation within the building and secondly to refurbish the hotel to a high standard.

It is accepted that the hotel will be closed for business for the duration of the works due to their complexity and scope. It is anticipated that the works will last for 4-6 months and are programmed for the winter of 2008/2009, should statutory consent be obtained in time.

Our client is the lessee of the premises, the freehold of which is owned by The Bedford Estates, whose approval will also be required for works of this nature. The Estates has issued a provisional approval and a copy can be submitted should this be required by the Council.

Site assessment

Location: The full postal address of the site is The Langland Hotel, 29-31 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HG. This building is located on the west side of Gower Street, between Store Street and Chenies Street and is opposite the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine situated on the East side of Gower Street.

Description: The Langland Hotel has been created out of a pair of former early nineteenth century houses that have been joined internally by means of historical breaches made in the party wall on all levels other than the basement. Both houses have principal floors on the ground and two upper floors plus basement and attic

storeys. The original plan form is typical of houses of this type, with a stair at the rear corner serving two rooms per level. Apart from recent subdivision associated with hotel use the buildings' configuration is largely unchanged from the original.

To the front is a basement area providing access to coal cellars extending under the pavement and to the rear are similar areas and rear cellars in use as ancillary rooms. Both original houses have a rear 'closet' extension of two or three storeys. There is a rear garden currently in use as amenity space for the hotel guests.

The historic and special architectural importance of the building follows largely from its type, age and relationship to its neighbours. It clearly contributes to a uniform terrace that is characteristic of the location and historical period. A further historical aspect to the building's importance stems from it being part of The Bedford Estates. Particular features of the building that justify its designation are the front and rear elevations and roof form, contributing to the terrace as a whole. The building's setting is one featuring many other listed buildings and is within the Bloomsbury conservation area.

A selection of site photographs has been submitted with this application and a copy of the topographical survey drawings is included in the application document set (the 'existing' drawings).

Opportunities and Constraints

The building is a substantial and flexible structure capable of accommodating refurbished hotel accommodation. It is in reasonable condition requiring only routine maintenance and redecoration works externally to ensure satisfactory performance as building envelope.

Due to the listed designation of the building, redevelopment, extension or external alteration is unlikely to be permitted and so have not been proposed. For the same reason the original sub-dividing walls within the building are to be retained, together with any surviving features of these walls such as skirting boards, cornices and door frames.

It has been assumed that relatively recent additions such as partitions and existing ensuite facilities can be removed, along with all building services and other recent insubstantial additions. New partitions and ensuite facilities are planned within the original structure and spatial sub-division, responding primarily to existing door and window locations, so as not to give rise to the need for unacceptable alterations.

Option generation and evaluation

Within the discipline described above there are very few options available for the refurbishment layout. The layout in the application drawings is self-evidently the only layout possible to answer the client brief within the tight constraints. We have consulted with the LPA on this at an early stage before the proposals were finalised and no major concerns have been raised.

Concept proposal

The concept was presented in a series of sketches used for briefing and planning authority consultation purposes at the early stages of the project. Input to the concept proposals was obtained from building services engineers Messrs Mecserve, to ensure that due allowance had been made for the installation of building services. A record of this meeting is included in this application for information (please note air conditioning referred to therein is no longer part of the proposals).

Design Development

Following further design development and consultation with the client the proposals have been finalised and are detailed in the application drawings and other documents included in the application.

Final proposal

Amount of development: The amount of floor space is unchanged from the existing condition within the building.

Layout: The layout of the proposals is driven entirely by the existing and original layout of the listed building, this being self-evident from the drawings.

Scale: Issues of scale do not arise with this project as the proposal is for internal refurbishment only.

Landscaping: The existing rear gardens will be left largely unaffected by the main refurbishment works.

Appearance: Issues of appearance do not arise as not external alterations to the building are proposed.

Access to the development

The existing access to the main entrance is compromised by steps and so does not meet current expectations for equal and convenient access. However due to the listed designation of the building we have proposed no permanent alterations to the front entrance that involve works being carried out. It is assumed that the hotel operator will deploy a manually removable ramp as and when required, a practical and flexible solution.

Within the building there are no physical improvements possible due to the listed designation. However due regard will be given, in finalising the selection of finishing materials, to provide an appropriate visual environment for guests with imperfect vision.

End of statement BAA August 2008